United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.16

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Faati (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Gambia)
later: Mr. Al Bayati (Chairman) ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(c) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*)

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

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06-56995 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Mr. Faati (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(c) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.4)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.4: United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

1. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Panama, the Russian Federation and Senegal had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

2. Almost four years had passed since the launch of the United Nations Literacy Decade. Despite the efforts made by Member States and other stakeholders to implement the outcome of the Decade and its International Plan of Action, literacy still remained a distant dream for over 700 million adults and 100 million children worldwide. That was unacceptable in a world where access to information and knowledge was the basis for opportunity and growth. Literacy was a serious challenge that needed to be given far greater attention and resources. It was also closely interrelated to other problems — above all, poverty eradication. The fact that the map of literacy continued to overlap with the map of social, gender and ethnic inequalities made the struggle for literacy a struggle not only for education, but also for social justice, human dignity and empowerment.

3. In 2005, world leaders had highlighted the importance of formal and informal education in poverty eradication and other goals, and had supported efforts by Member States to implement the Education for All initiative. While primary responsibility lay with Governments, the international community should continue to support national efforts. The successful implementation of agreed targets would largely depend on coordinated efforts by the international community. To that end, the draft resolution requested the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to reinforce its lead role in coordinating the Decade and to conduct the mid-Decade review in collaboration with all Decade partners during 2007 and 2008.

4. It was unlikely that the Decade's goals would be met unless effective action was taken. There was also growing concern that literacy was not sufficiently high on national agendas. The international community needed to take concrete action to achieve the Decade's outcomes and regularly review progress made. To that end, the draft resolution also requested all relevant United Nations bodies, in cooperation with Governments, to take immediate, concrete steps to address high illiteracy rates and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the progress achieved in implementing their national programmes and plans of action and to submit the next progress report on the implementation of the International Plan of Action to the General Assembly in 2008.

5. Lastly, she introduced the following revisions: in the third preambular paragraph, "recalling further" should be replaced by "reaffirming", the words "Outcome", "in" and "world leaders" should be deleted from the first line, and the phrase "and the need to strive for expanded secondary and higher education as well as vocational education and technical training, especially for girls and women, the creation of human resources and infrastructure capabilities and the empowerment of those living in poverty" should be inserted after "illiteracy"; and in the eighth preambular paragraph, the phrase ", that over 100 million children are still out of school" should be replaced by "and about 100 million children of primary school age are still not enrolled in primary schools".

6. Her delegation had also received some suggestions concerning the operative paragraphs but wished to consult the sponsors before presenting the final text to the Committee.

7. **The Chairman** said that Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Israel, Liberia, Thailand and Yemen had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/61/41, Corr.1 and Add.1, 207, 275 and Corr.1, and 299)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/61/270)

8. **Ms. Cavaliere** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country was building a new model of social and economic development centred on the human being. The Government had recognized children and adolescents as developing persons having the rights and responsibilities belonging to all human beings. Accordingly, in 1998 it had approved the Organic Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents, according to which they were the subjects of rights and responsibilities which must be safeguarded by the State, the family and society. By adopting that law, Venezuela had also brought its domestic legislation into line with its international commitments, particularly those relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also now had a national child- and adolescent-protection system under the National Council for Child and Adolescent Rights.

9. As part of its efforts to promote and protect the rights of young people, her Government had implemented comprehensive care programmes for children, low-income families and single mothers; implemented a school-meals programme; developed an immunization programme for the most vulnerable children; recognized the right of children and adolescents to education, thereby allowing children without identification documents to enrol; and strengthened the Intersectoral Commission against Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela condemned all forms of violence against children and adolescents and called on all States that had not yet done so to follow its lead and become a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols.

10. The economic and social environment in which children and adolescents grew up must not be ignored. The world must recognize that the poverty facing millions of children and adolescents throughout the world seriously violated their rights and hindered their development. While it was a welcome contribution, the Independent Expert's study on violence against children (A/61/299) did not address the issue from that perspective. Its recommendations, though valuable, were therefore incomplete. Poverty, hunger, lack of education and disease were some of the worst forms of violence against children and adolescents and were, moreover, linked to trafficking in, and prostitution and sexual and commercial exploitation of, children and adolescents.

11. Her country was also concerned about violence in the media. In 2005, the Government had approved the Law on the Social Responsibility of Radio and Television, which aimed to establish social responsibility among service providers, advertisers, independent producers and users.

12. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia) said that implementation of the final document of the twenty-seventh special session, entitled "A world fit for children", would be a major boost to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. For its part, Mongolia was currently implementing a national plan of action for the protection and development of children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had also recently approved the forthcoming country programme for Mongolia.

13. Mongolia was committed to ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Her Government had adopted a law on the protection of the child and a law on domestic violence, and approved a national plan of action on trafficking in and protection of children and women from commercial sexual exploitation. The plan of action aimed to prevent the spread of human trafficking by creating the relevant legal environment, raising awareness and improving protection and rehabilitation for victims.

14. Children and young people needed to be directly involved in formulating, implementing and monitoring child-related strategies. In 2005, her Government had convened a national consultative meeting to discuss a draft policy framework on child and youth participation, in which the relevant ministries and agencies, members of parliament, local governors, NGOs, international organizations and, most importantly, children themselves had participated. The aims were to create an enabling environment that supported child and youth participation in a wide range of areas; to tell children and young people about their

rights and provide them with all the information they needed to make informed choices; and to create an environment where their opinions were heard and respected. That would require a major change in the mindset of adults. To that end, the framework placed a particular emphasis on parenting education and on the training of all professionals working with children. The framework was in the process of being finalized to reflect the ideas raised at the consultative meeting. Once adopted and implemented, it would ensure that children's and young people's right to participate would be enforced in practice.

15. In November 2005, a national summit had been held to assess progress in implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in response to Mongolia's second periodic report. Over 1,000 representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions and children from all over the country had attended. The broad involvement of all stakeholders, including children, in identifying challenges and designing solutions would help strengthen efforts to achieve the goals of both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the twenty-seventh special session. Mongolia would spare no effort in implementing those goals through both national efforts and cooperation with its development partners.

16. **Ms. Aliyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that, from the outset, Azerbaijan had supported the preparatory process for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299) by participating in regional consultations and providing input at the national and regional levels. Her Government attached great importance to the findings and recommendations of the study, but wished to highlight a number of issues.

17. She endorsed the study's recommendation concerning comprehensive prevention strategies that would address the underlying causes and establish long-term policies to eradicate stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. While the study touched on some particularly vulnerable groups, such as street children and refugee and other displaced children, the focus on children living in especially difficult circumstances should be much stronger, as such children — particularly those suffering the consequences of armed conflict — were incomparably more vulnerable than children living under normal conditions. The issue undoubtedly required more concerted and continued efforts at all levels.

18. The protective factors outlined in the study, meanwhile, should be elaborated further so that they could be studied and mainstreamed into relevant national policies and legislation. Efforts aimed at strengthening and supporting the family and good parenting warranted particular attention. The gender dimension of violence against children was another issue requiring special emphasis. Sociocultural misconceptions caused different forms of violence against young girls. Awareness of the issue needed to be raised, for example through educational programmes, programmes for young parents, and information and media campaigns.

19. Noting that national efforts should be complemented by international action, she encouraged international and regional organizations, particularly UNICEF, and the donor community to assist countries in building institutional capacity and implementing the relevant national policies. While stressing the critical follow-up role played by UNICEF and other United Nations entities, she also wished to stress the importance of regional activities. In particular, regional organizations such as the Council of Europe should be involved in implementing the recommendations and provide input to national efforts. It would also be useful for the study to be launched nationally, disseminated in a child-friendly version and translated into national languages.

20. Turning to the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/61/275), she said it was a heartbreaking reality that armed conflicts remained one of the major threats to the protection of children's rights worldwide. As a country whose younger generation had shared the plight of millions of other child victims of armed conflict, Azerbaijan had from the beginning supported the Special Representative's mandate and activities, particularly efforts to end impunity for those responsible for crimes against children in wartime. The international community should give particular attention to all child victims of armed conflict, irrespective of whether the conflict in question was ongoing, frozen or protracted, and grave violations against children in all conflict settings should be adequately addressed.

21. Her Government had established a State Committee for Family, Women and Children, the first Government agency directly responsible for drafting and implementing State policy on children. The

Committee worked in close partnership with UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other relevant organizations. It had submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers a draft national action plan on family and women and its recommendations for the new programme of action on the protection of child and maternal health. Moreover, as a result of its efforts, the issue of violence against women and children had been reflected in the State programme on poverty reduction and sustainable development.

22. She expressed appreciation to UNICEF for the tremendous work it did for the welfare of Azerbaijan's children. The long-standing partnership between Azerbaijan and UNICEF in key areas of concern was critical for ensuring implementation of national strategies.

23. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that the study on violence against children (A/61/299) reflected the realities facing today's children. He hoped that the international community would take account of the study's recommendations, which his delegation supported, in order to put an end to all violence against children.

24. If the international community had so far failed in its quest to protect children against violence, it was because it had never taken the trouble to listen to them, always seeking instead to solve children's problems without involving them, and speaking on their behalf without understanding their problems, thereby building a wall of incomprehension between the two. Children were the first victims of poverty, armed conflict, disease and many forms of violence, including sexual exploitation. That sad reality contrasted with international commitments.

25. In the four years since the adoption of the Plan of Action for a world fit for children, the condition of children had hardly changed. The issuance of the study on violence against children must encourage the international community to do more for children, in particular by stepping up the involvement of Governments, United Nations specialized agencies, NGOs, the media, religious leaders, teachers, parents, members of parliament and children themselves. Together, the world could and must build a powerful chain of solidarity in favour of children.

26. Since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994, his Government had taken many initiatives to promote and protect the rights of children, such as creating a radio station run by young people, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO; establishing a fund to help AIDS orphans, in partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); setting up a children's parliament; and, most recently, setting up a national observatory to monitor children's rights. Moreover, the Parliament had adopted a law prohibiting trafficking in and exploitation of children throughout the country.

27. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) said that her country had ratified almost all the international instruments on the protection of children and had recently submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Government had instituted an integrated community approach to preschool education, providing health-care, nutritional and educational services that had been recognized by UNESCO as a universal model. Access to primary education had improved considerably and there was every indication that "education for all" would be achieved by 2010.

28. The Ministry of Health had implemented primary-health-care programmes for children that included vaccination campaigns, treatment of childhood diseases, the management of epidemics and malaria, and the treatment of children living with HIV/AIDS. It had also reduced infant and child mortality substantially.

29. Senegal was firmly committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had adopted laws and had established programmes and mechanisms to protect children's rights including, inter alia, a family education project in Koranic schools and a counselling and information centre to protect victims of trafficking and to combat the marginalization of children. Other initiatives included the adoption of a national strategy to eliminate child labour; birth registration; the elimination of excision and early marriage; an advocacy campaign to eliminate violence against children; a joint initiative with development partners and civil society to rehabilitate street children; and the integration of issues arising from the Convention into school curricula and training programmes for court officials.

30. **Mr. Noghès** (Monaco) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had highlighted the need to ensure that children reached their potential and that their human rights were respected. In 2004, Prince

Albert II had invited the international community to work together to end the impunity of perpetrators of violence. In that regard, it was necessary to reorganize existing actions and resources and, possibly, elect a special representative for violence against children who would focus on promoting cooperation at the regional and international levels.

31. States had an obligation to enforce respect for children's rights; guarantee their access to basic services; and provide assistance to families so that children could benefit from a safe and healthy environment. In Monaco, children with disabilities were taken care of in accordance with the guidelines of the Council of Europe and the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council.

32. The Government was currently implementing a cooperation programme for the improvement of health and education in four African countries. Initiatives had been developed to combat malnutrition, opportunistic diseases, the practice of excision and the transmission of HIV/AIDS to small children; provide children with disabilities with means to move around; and support child victims of sexual abuse. Moreover, as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Princess Caroline of Hanover was helping with a project on strengthening women's capacities to promote education for children in rural areas in two African countries.

33. His delegation welcomed the initiative of making the results of the study on violence against children accessible to children themselves as a means of preventing such violence. It also encouraged Governments to reintegrate abused children and ensure their active participation in forums aimed at preventing violence.

34. **Mr. Al-Shehab** (Kuwait) said that the recommendations set forth in the reports under discussion would help in promoting the rights of children. The protection of children — the future of all societies — was of the utmost importance and was integral to the protection of human rights. It was essential to elaborate plans and programmes aimed at ensuring that children enjoyed a secure and stable future.

35. Kuwait devoted a great deal of attention to children and early child care, not least because the majority of its inhabitants were under 18 years of age. Moreover, it was classified as having a high rate of development. The Government had devised numerous educational and child-health-care programmes through a variety of governmental and non-governmental institutions, and a committee for children and the family was responsible for monitoring the implementation of conventions and recommendations. Kuwait also had several associations for children with disabilities and special needs that worked for the social integration of such children, who enjoyed the same rights as able children. The education indicators for Kuwait were similarly high and its child mortality rates were being reduced by over 2 per cent annually.

36. Kuwait's concern for children extended to the regional and international levels. It had, for instance, established an association dedicated to the early development of Kuwaiti and Arab children, as well as an Arab children's council, and it spared no effort when it came to participating in and organizing international conferences and seminars on children. Kuwait had also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols and was a party to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

37. Lastly, he drew attention to the plight of children living in difficult circumstances and children who were victims of armed conflict and foreign occupation. In the recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon, children had accounted for one third of the casualties; children were also victims of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Efforts should therefore be redirected to implementing the letter and spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to protect those rights and guarantee a secure future for children.

38. **Ms. Al-Humaidi** (Qatar) said that her country was intent on promoting and protecting the rights of children, in accordance with its new Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indeed, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had welcomed Qatar's new Constitution and its enactment of a law prohibiting the involvement of children in camel racing. It had also welcomed the country's efforts to review the provisions of its criminal and labour laws, as well as its establishment of a shelter providing care and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking, including children.

39. Qatar was putting the finishing touches to its new national plan for children, which focused on three core areas: survival and health; development and education; and protection against violence, abuse and neglect. It

was also preparing to draft a new law on children. Ministries and civil-society institutions were additionally making concerted efforts to draw up programmes to strengthen children's rights. Progress had been made in establishing institutions catering to various categories of children, and cooperative efforts were under way with local and international organizations to enhance the performance of personnel working with children. In conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), efforts were also under way to promote awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provide relevant training courses for, inter alia, judges, doctors and labour inspectors.

40. Lastly, Qatar had extended assistance to Asian disaster victims in order to alleviate their suffering and discharge some of the collective responsibility for such tasks as rebuilding schools and helping sick women and children in the countries affected.

41. **Ms. Abdelhak** (Algeria) said that the violence described in the in-depth study on violence against children (A/61/299) was particularly disturbing because it often took place within the family or school. Society had an obligation to protect children and to spread the message that violence against children was a grave violation of human rights. A special representative on violence against children, as proposed by the Independent Expert, could make a significant contribution by helping States implement the recommendations in the study.

42. Algeria had launched a series of awareness campaigns and had developed a national strategy focusing on the legal, physical, social, behavioural and sexual aspects of violence against children. The Government had adopted a new comprehensive law that incorporated all the provisions on the protection of children found in the Constitution, the civil and criminal codes and relevant international instruments to which Algeria was a party, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The law recommended the appointment of an ombudsman who would prepare an annual report on the rights of the child and participate in the drafting of reports to United Nations bodies. The ombudsman would also play an important role in limiting violence by ensuring that existing laws were implemented.

43. The Government was of the opinion that children living under foreign occupation came within the scope of the study and that their situation deserved to be examined.

44. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her Government had taken several measures to promote and protect the rights of the child. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and ILO Convention No. 182. The Government had also established a human rights commission whose mandate included the monitoring of children's rights, while a directorate coordinated all issues relating to children.

45. In many developing countries, the protection of children was the responsibility of the family and the community. However, as a result of rural-urban migration, HIV/AIDS and high levels of poverty, social safety nets had eroded, the community was no longer able to care for children, and child labour had increased. With the support of its development partners, the Government was implementing a pilot project to combat the worst forms of child labour in a number of sectors. It was also implementing a justice-facilitation programme aimed at addressing the abuse of children's rights and ensuring that orphans were taken care by the community with the assistance of the State.

46. In an attempt to curb violence in schools, education policy provided for the participation of children in school boards, while taking into account gender parity. In addition, a nation-wide junior council enabled children from a broad range of backgrounds to contribute to the national development agenda, child development and the national poverty strategy.

47. The Government believed that the promotion and protection of children's rights depended on cooperation among Governments, civil society organizations, development partners and other stakeholders. The international community needed to work together to translate its pledges into concrete actions and achieve its goals.

48. **Ms. Al Saleh** (Oman) said that Oman, as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had recently submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Other instruments ratified by Oman included the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons,

Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

49. In Oman, there was no gender discrimination in education, health or social and legal services. The Civil Status Act guaranteed an identity for every child born in Oman or elsewhere to Omani parents or an Omani father and for all children of unknown parents. Significant progress had been achieved in child health. Child mortality had dropped dramatically and new education programmes had led to a decrease in juvenile deaths caused by traffic accidents. The Ministry of Health was cooperating with other ministries and UNICEF to combat malnutrition, which continued to be a problem.

50. The Ministry of Education had made considerable effort to provide free education to all children over the age of six and had sought the assistance of UNICEF on ways to incorporate the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the school curriculum. The Government had also taken steps to ensure that children were able to express their ideas and views through, inter alia, an electronic website and a television programme which encouraged dialogue with officials concerning educational issues.

51. The Ministry of Social Development was coordinating with other ministries, NGOs and UNICEF to prepare a national strategy for Omani children, which was expected to be completed by early 2007.

52. *Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Chairman, took the Chair.*

53. **Mr. Al-Sada** (Yemen) said that the daily tragedies experienced by Palestinian children on account of the arbitrary practices of the Israeli army were extremely disturbing, as were the numbers of innocent children killed by the huge quantities of cluster bombs left scattered by that same army in southern Lebanon during the recent war. He called on the international community to assume its responsibilities in regard to those matters.

54. He said that sharia law provided for the rights of the child, both before and after birth, and added that Yemen had sought to ensure that its international obligations concerning those very rights were covered under its Constitution and legislation. Yemen had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour. It had a Higher Council for Maternal and Child Welfare, and had enacted a new children's law. A number of departments had also been established to deal with children's affairs and various child-related studies were under way. Basic education was now free and corporal punishment in schools was prohibited. In regard to health matters, female genital mutilation was little practised in Yemen; it was outlawed in hospitals and Government health units. The country had also adopted measures to prevent child smuggling and trafficking in children.

55. The Yemeni President's recent election manifesto had emphasized such matters as protection for children against violence, the amendment of laws in line with a new children's law and expanded immunization campaigns. As for the involvement of children in legislation and planning, Yemen had pioneered a unique experiment in the form of a children's parliament, designed to instil democratic principles and familiarize children with their rights. The child parliamentarians were able to request an audience with the appropriate ministers to discuss improvements to the situation of children in Yemen. Yemen spared no effort in providing alternative care facilities for children with special needs, including orphans and street children. Yemen had now moved from the stage of legislation to that of implementation, although more concerted efforts would be necessary at the national and international levels in order to overcome the remaining obstacles.

56. **Ms. Al-Shamisi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had adopted a comprehensive development policy based on the conviction that people were a country's real wealth and that children were its most important asset for the future. In consequence, the State had enacted laws and taken the necessary measures to ensure the protection of children's interests and prepare them as well as possible for the future. The establishment of the Supreme Council for Childhood and Motherhood was one of the major steps taken by the Government to enhance the care given to children.

57. An important measure taken to protect the rights of children, both nationals and foreigners, was the federal law adopted in 2005 prohibiting the involvement of young people under the age of 18, in

camel races. The State had been applying very strict enforcement, including tight control on all entries to the country to prevent the smuggling of children for any purpose, including camel racing, as well as the imposition of fines or prison sentences on violators. Children removed from camel races were provided with education, medical treatment and, if possible, reintegration into their families.

58. The country's remarkable progress in its care for children included the reduction of infant and under-five mortality to 8 per thousand, one of the lowest rates worldwide, immunization of 95 per cent of children against childhood diseases and the elimination of polio in 2002. Further achievements included reaching 86 per cent enrolment in elementary schools for both sexes. the provision of social care for orphans, and the use of modern methods for care and rehabilitation of disabled children and those with special needs. Centres had been established to provide social support to abused or neglected children, and others had been set up for the reformation of delinquents in accordance with the latest methods.

59. The United Arab Emirates felt deep concern about the tragic humanitarian and security conditions under which children were living in the occupied Palestinian territories, where they suffered violence and destruction at the hands of the occupying Israeli Power. Thousands of children suffered death, maiming and displacement, together with the spread of poverty and dangerous diseases, in contravention of international humanitarian law and in flagrant violation of human rights. The international community should redouble its efforts to compel Israel to stop its hostile policy and respect international humanitarian law, especially the fourth Geneva Convention, in its treatment of civilians, including women and children. The international community should also provide support to the Palestinian people to help them meet their essential needs, until a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement for the Palestinian problem could be reached.

60. **Mr. Margarian** (Armenia) said that protection of the rights of children remained high on the Government's agenda. The necessary conditions were being created for the upbringing and development of children, including those who had been neglected, especially by improving and expanding legislation. Amendments had been made to the Family Code, the Civil Code and the Law on Protection of Children without Parental Care. The Government had identified the types of institution that were allowed to provide child care, and had prescribed rules for the accommodation of children in such institutions.

61. The country's child-protection policy was designed to create a family-like environment for every child. A special strategy covered children in difficult circumstances. The main principles included prevention of discrimination and abuse, provision of equal conditions, creation of a family-like environment, and activation of the role of the community in resolving children's issues, through cooperation and an integrated approach.

62. A project currently under way in one of the northern regions of Armenia was aimed at reducing the number of "social orphans". It sought to promote the return of children to their families and the reactivation of their ties with their community by establishing a protective environment. The next goal would be for the financial resources to be shifted to supporting their families, with the aim of ensuring their care and upbringing in their biological family.

63. Creation of the institution of the foster family would greatly help orphaned children, by taking them out of orphanages. It would also assist in the distribution of the targeted help from the Government, would reduce costs to the State budget and create jobs for foster families. Steps had been taken towards establishing the appropriate legal basis and implementing pilot projects, with invaluable assistance from UNICEF.

64. Another Government project was designed to assist children who had left orphanages by creating conditions for their full integration into society, including in the areas of accommodation, vocational guidance and training, provision of a basic income, and free health care and legal assistance.

65. **Ms. Hill** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that in order to bring about a future that was sustainable, prosperous and secure, a world had to be created where children could reach their full potential and where they were treated as human beings having dignity and rights. It was necessary to move beyond providing basic services to supporting the whole of the child's development and its active participation at family, community and national level.

66. The three countries welcomed the increase in States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child over the past year, and reiterated their hope that universal ratification would soon be achieved. They also acknowledged the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF in particular in promoting and making the commitments a reality. Over the past four years they had voiced their concern that the United Nations continued to lack an adequate framework in which to promote and debate children's rights. United Nations reform and the establishment of the Human Rights Council provided an opportunity that should not be missed. There was a need to look at new approaches beyond the omnibus draft resolution on the rights of the child and to open up United Nations forums to the contributions of children and their representatives.

67. The much-anticipated Independent Expert's study demonstrated that violence against children was a global phenomenon that impoverished families, communities and countries. The three countries commended the process of preparing the study, in particular the contribution of children, and supported full consideration of its recommendations.

68. They also commended the progress made in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict, and welcomed the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed conflict with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Also welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan, they urged the Working Group to make similar recommendations.

69. More broadly, the three countries encouraged the Security Council to apply targeted and graduated measures against parties to conflict who continued to commit atrocities against children, and in doing so to use all the tools at its disposal, such as mandating peacekeeping missions and naming all violators. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) was critical to bridging the gap between international norms and the grim reality still faced by too many children caught in armed conflicts.

70. The General Assembly was preparing to adopt a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which would be a milestone in the realization of the rights of children with disabilities on an equal basis with others. That convention included a specific provision on the rights of the child, and the three countries hoped that it would help to create the kind of inclusive society in which the potential of all children could be realized. Australia, Canada and New Zealand called on all Member States to sign and ratify the new convention as soon as possible.

71. **Mr. Ritter** (Liechtenstein) noted that one of the main messages of the in-depth study was that full respect for the physical and psychological integrity of children must be a universally applied rule of civilization. Liechtenstein welcomed the highly participatory approach adopted in the preparation of the study and the unprecedented level and quality of participation by children. The study and its preparatory work could significantly contribute to enhancing political commitment, accelerating momentum and strengthening concerted action at all levels in order to address violence against children. It should provide the necessary knowledge base with regard to the extent of different types of violence, enabling targeted counter-measures to be drawn up.

72. However, Liechtenstein was somewhat concerned that the broadness of the approach taken in the study might render follow-up difficult, owing to an apparent lack of focus and priorities. Efforts and resources to ensure effective follow-up could also be overstretched if there was no clear division of tasks among the different actors within the United Nations system already promoting children's rights. Creating a new mechanism, as recommended by the study, would not per se solve that problem since such a mechanism would be tasked with addressing all forms of violence against children without distinction. For that reason, Liechtenstein took the view that any mandate created or complemented to ensure proper follow-up must be based on clear criteria as to the situations and issues in which concrete action was needed.

73. Situations in which children were particularly vulnerable should be given continued special attention by the international community. That was especially true for armed conflicts, and it needed to be stressed that, despite the promising progress recently made under the leadership of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, much more needed to be done in order to bridge the large implementation gap in that area. Establishing a new United Nations mechanism with a primary focus on alternative discipline in school and at home would not be commensurate with the seriousness of violations of

children's integrity in a number of situations outside armed conflict. At the same time, he agreed that the follow-up to the study should be promoted in a way that was also accessible and visible to children. Such visibility could be facilitated through the involvement of the Human Rights Council. The Council, in its monitoring activities in the field of children's rights, would also be well placed to build on the momentum created by the study on violence. In addition, Liechtenstein suggested that enhanced use be made of the system of goodwill ambassadors in order to give the follow-up high visibility.

74. For the follow-up to be successful, the various measures needed to be taken at all levels. The preparatory process had shown that regional organizations could play an essential role in creating a favourable environment for political momentum and action by States. At the national level, it would be important to cooperate with human rights institutions, while follow-up at the local level would particularly benefit from an active civil society in the promotion and protection of children's rights. With full involvement at all those levels, decisions taken at the United Nations level would have the greatest chance of making a real difference to the life of children at risk of violence.

75. **Ms. Asani-Ndelemani** (Malawi) said that Malawi continued to uphold the ideals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the final document of the special session on children, as well as remaining fully committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, of which almost all directly addressed the rights of children. For the full and harmonious development of any child's personality, he or she must grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Accordingly, the Government had put in place a number of specific measures covering early-childhood development, orphans and other vulnerable children, and children's survival, protection and development. They included programmes for health promotion, quality education, protection against abuse, exploitation and violence, and for combating and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS.

76. In 2005, Malawi with the support of UNICEF had launched a zero-tolerance campaign on child abuse. It involved information, education and communication through television and radio programmes. Moreover, paralegals had been deployed to monitor prisons and provide legal aid to children in conflict with the law. The Government continued to alert the general public, law enforcement bodies, commercial enterprises and farmers to the increased risk of child labour and sexual exploitation of young girls. A programme to prevent sexual and economic exploitation and abuse of children was currently being implemented in seven districts in the southern region of the country. The challenge would be to bring the initiative to full scale so as to cover vulnerable children countrywide.

77. In its effort to reduce child mortality, Malawi was implementing an approach for the integrated management of childhood illnesses. Through its plan of action for orphans and other vulnerable children, Malawi was seeking to improve the lives of children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, poverty and other factors. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the focus was on prevention, care and support programmes, and on increasing the visibility of children affected and infected. More support was needed to ensure timely testing, treatment and access to antiretroviral treatment. In addition, it was critical to scale up the prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

78. Under its efforts to ensure education for all, Malawi had adopted a universal free primary education programme. In addition, targeted programmes had been designed to address gender issues within the education sector, as well as issues of poor attendance, repetition and dropout of children at all levels. The provision of quality education remained a serious challenge. Further, children had to be educated as to their basic human rights, so that when those rights were violated they themselves could call for help. However, children needed also to be made aware that rights went hand-in-hand with responsibilities.

79. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government had legislated for the promotion and protection of children's rights. It attached great importance to children's issues, particularly since over half of its population was under 19 years of age, and carefully monitored the implementation of national plans for children. Enormous strides had been made in recent years, under a national strategy devised by the Ministry of Education, in association with UNICEF and the Aga Khan Development Network. As a result, the idea of a children's parliament had been born as a way of providing young teenagers with a democratic platform for dialogue, listening and creativity, as well as a means of boosting self-confidence and results-

oriented discussion. Two successful pilots had already been conducted in one governorate, but the final goal was to have such a parliament in each governorate.

80. In addition, a national child protection plan had been elaborated on the basis of research on child abuse, and a national child abuse register had been established. Other measures included awareness-raising campaigns, the incorporation of children's rights into school curricula and the establishment of a child shelter and a child hotline.

81. The Syrian Arab Republic actively participated in and hosted regional Arab gatherings relating to children's affairs. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as ILO Convention No. 182 concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour and ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment.

82. A considerable number of Syrian children, however, were denied the benefit of such achievements, having lived under the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967. They suffered daily from the arbitrary practices of the occupation authorities, including, inter alia, the closure of Arabic-language educational facilities and the imposition of Israeli curricula and nationality, the aim being to obliterate the sense of national belonging among the younger generations. Thousands of families had also been forcibly removed from their homes and their possessions seized. Equally disturbing were the daily repressive practices of the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian children and the massacre of children during the Israeli raid on Lebanon. Over a million cluster bombs had been dropped on Lebanon, many of them resembling toys or sweets, thereby indicating Israel's deliberate targeting of children, leaving many killed or disabled. The second Israeli attack on Qana in 2006 had also killed 25 children who had already been left permanently disabled from the first attack in 1997.

83. She stressed that there should be no discrimination or double standards when it came to dealing with child-related issues and to elaborating a comprehensive strategy to eliminate violence against children in the interest of future generations.

84. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba) observed that, as Member States came together to evaluate compliance with the commitments undertaken to improve the conditions of life of all children, there were no grounds for optimism or celebration. At the present time, more than 115 million children were not attending school; more than 11 million under-fives died every year from curable diseases; the AIDS pandemic now affected more than 2 million people under the age of 15, with more than half a million children dying every year; and infant mortality was still far too high, in some regions almost reaching three figures per thousand live births. Those stark figures contrasted sharply with the idyllic picture painted by those who were the beneficiaries of neoliberal globalization.

85. But bringing about a world in which children enjoyed all their rights, free from poverty, marginalization and exclusion, was not a matter of fine words: it was necessary to change the current unfair economic order that worked to the benefit of only 20 per cent of the population of the planet and excluded the rest. Without international solidarity, without an end to so much inequality between countries, without the promotion of social development for all, there would be no way to eradicate child poverty or reduce its effects, or to resolve the conflicts affecting children around the world.

86. While welcoming the Independent Expert's study on violence against children (A/61/299), Cuba would have preferred a more wide-ranging approach, looking at the different aspects of violence rather than taking a simple approach to what was a multifaceted phenomenon. That would have made the study a more useful contribution towards resolving the tragic situation of many of the world's children.

87. While recognizing also the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict as outlined in his report (A/61/275), he wished to reiterate Cuba's concern that the General Assembly was being progressively edged away from its mandate concerning promotion and protection of the rights of the child, while the influence of the Security Council in that area was growing.

88. Cuba could point with pride to advances in its care for children, starting from the efforts to guarantee all children a good start in life and universal access to education, goals that were far from being achieved in many countries of the world. The entire child population of Cuba had access to all health services, and infant mortality had dropped by 2004 to 5.8 per thousand live births. The entire population of primary

school age was enrolled, and 99 per cent of those between the ages of 12 and 15 were attending secondary school. The teacher-to-pupil ratio in primary education was 1 to 20.

89. Cuba had made those achievements despite the blockade maintained against it for more than four decades, constituting a fundamental obstacle to the expansion of social benefits to all children. Under these circumstances, maintaining the advances achieved in the most significant indicators for child survival and development constituted an ongoing challenge that called for enormous efforts by the Government and society. Thus, the blockade was a fundamental expression of violence against the children of Cuba.

90. If there was not greater solidarity, if selfishness did not cease and if a fairer and more sustainable international economic order was not established, then only a few children of the planet would be able to enjoy "a world fit for children".

91. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) said that her Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Once the decade-long war in her country had been declared over in 2002, her Government had established the Ministry for Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and had taken other concrete steps to protect the rights of all children in Sierra Leone, irrespective of age or gender, and to care for the many children who had suffered cruel treatment during the war.

92. In order to mitigate some of the problems generated by post-war trauma, the Government was continuing to adopt measures to protect children, in consonance with the Convention and the commitments set out in the final document of the special session of the General Assembly on children (resolution S-27/2, annex). For example, a National Commission for War-Affected Children had been established, and a child rights bill, awaiting enactment, presented a framework for harmonizing national laws on children with the existing international human rights instruments.

93. Her country was focusing its efforts on a number of areas essential to the well-being of children, in particular, protection from violence, abuse, abduction and exploitation, free compulsory education, and adequate health care. However, health and education facilities for children in remote communities remained inadequate; cultural values favouring boys still existed; adequate infrastructure and trained personnel required to combat human trafficking were lacking; additional reforms to legislation on juvenile justice and child sexual abuse were needed; and the situation of orphans and other vulnerable children was growing critical, particularly in view of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

94. Sierra Leone had already made progress towards honouring the commitments annexed to General Assembly resolution S-27/2, yet much remained to be done to that end. She expressed her Government's appreciation to UNICEF and all its other development partners for the very valuable assistance they had provided on many issues relating to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Her delegation hoped that those partners would continue to support her country's efforts in behalf of children.

95. **Mr. Srivoranart** (Thailand) said that the Thai Government was fully committed to implementing all its commitments undertaken at the special session (General Assembly resolution S-27/2, annex). Early in 2006 Thailand had become a party to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had submitted its second periodic report under the Convention.

96. The Declaration and Plan of Action annexed to General Assembly resolution S-27/2 had been incorporated into his country's national strategy and plan of action, in whose formulation a wide range of stakeholders, including children, had participated. Children would also be active players in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. The strategy and plan were also being translated into action at the local level, where their impact was most noticeable.

97. It was imperative to adopt an uncompromising approach to the protection of children. His delegation therefore welcomed the Independent Expert's study on violence against children (A/61/299) and endorsed, among other recommendations, his proposal to appoint a special representative on violence against children (ibid., para. 120). The representative could serve as a crucial catalyst for action at the global, regional and national levels and provide a mechanism for greater policy coherence and operational coordination among agencies, both within and outside the United Nations system.

98. All forms of structural violence against children must also be tackled, including poverty,

underdevelopment, lack of basic sanitation and safe drinking water, inadequate health-care infrastructure, armed conflict, gender inequality, and criminal exploitation and abuse of children. He also drew attention to the perils of HIV/AIDS, which was leaving behind it a "generation of orphans".

99. His delegation strongly supported measures to prevent violence to children and underscored the importance of sensitizing the wider public to the dangers of such violence to both children and society. Empowerment of children was also an effective prevention strategy, and accordingly all children should have the opportunity to receive a quality education, particularly on human rights issues. Relevant agencies in Thailand would conduct "training for trainers" workshops on the rights of the child throughout the country, and those trainers would pass their knowledge on to their peers and, most importantly, to children. His country had also established councils for youth and children to enhance their participation on issues affecting their lives.

100. **Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan) said that the conclusions and recommendations of the Independent Expert's study on violence against children provided a sound basis for the future work of Member States and the United Nations system to protect children from violence. Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of General Assembly resolution S-27/2 depended largely on the political will and economic capacity of Member States and the effectiveness of international assistance provided to countries in need.

101. Children were full members of society from the moment they were born and therefore should enjoy all human rights. His country's multisectoral approach to the promotion of the rights and interests of children involved Government agencies, a human rights ombudsman, and national NGOs and youth movements, which cooperated with one another. Measures which his Government was implementing to benefit children included action to improve the status of women and children; improved legislation and arrangements for education, health care and social services for children; a national plan on human rights integrating the rights of the child into school and university curricula; and a plan of action to combat and prevent human trafficking. In response to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning his country's initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, his Government had established a Committee on Child Protection under the Ministry of Education and Science.

102. Kazakhstan continued to face serious problems with respect to juvenile delinquency, child neglect and child mortality and was working closely with international agencies to confront those issues. In recognition of UNICEF's efforts on behalf of the world's children, his Government would continue to make voluntary contributions to the Fund.

103. **Ms. Kalamwina** (Zambia) said that her delegation supported the recommendations in the Independent Expert's study on violence against children and urged the international community to endeavour to implement them fully.

104. Zambia's ongoing commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of children was demonstrated by its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its support for General Assembly resolution S-27/2 and its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. She cited examples of the considerable progress her country had made in implementing the Convention, including advances in primary health care, especially in efforts to combat HIV/AIDS; nutrition; school enrolment; constitutional and legislative protection against corporal punishment; and enhancement of the rights and protection of citizens, especially children, through amendments to the Penal Code.

105. Her Government thanked its development partners for their invaluable support of those efforts and called upon them for their continued assistance to enable her country to achieve its goals.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.